

<b>Key Policy in discussion</b>	<b>ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN AND THE VOICE</b>
<b>Portfolio and or agency</b>	<b>Cross Agency</b>
<b>Date Issued</b>	<b>20 May 2023</b>
<b>Key author/s of this budget analysis:</b>	<b>Prof Helen Hodgson, Curtin Law School and Chair, NFAW Social Policy Committee</b>

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### **Key Portfolio Issues**

NFAW endorses the Voice, and we support the call from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to be active participants in decision-making. The Wiyi Yani U Thangani National Summit, held the same week as the Budget was released, has said: [“As First Nations women and girls, we sing out, we know we have a right to our voice and to be responded to. We are not invisible or silent—you cannot ignore us.”](#) We support the call for a National Framework for Action and for recognition and investment in the Institute for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality to ensure that all policies that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait women are developed in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

### **The Voice**

NFAW was, and continues to be, a supporter of the Uluru Statement from the Heart as we recognise it as a call by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for real and practical change in Australia through the establishment of a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament. The Uluru Statement from the Heart is an invitation to all Australians to walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in a movement for a better future.

Evidence from Australia and around the world consistently shows that community empowerment, involvement, and self-determination supports equitable outcomes. NFAW believes that a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament will enable greater Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and consultation across a broad range of areas, including health, education and justice.

In the Gender Lens on the Budget series we have advocated for and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their families. The poor socially and politically determined health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is of deep concern to NFAW members. The worsening in health and wellbeing and their determinants among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples clearly shows that current strategies are failing, and that the directives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders have not been supported. It is

governments who have long had the power to improve the trajectory by allocating resources to strategies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women self-determine will work for them.

From NFAW's experience over many decades, including in the development of the Gender Lens, we appreciate that much policy formulation and development occurs at the executive level of government. From our lengthy experience with policy development, we know the how important the Voice could be in shaping and defining policy matters that impact on Indigenous people.

We welcome the work of the Australian Human Rights Commission in the [Wiyi Yani U Thangani \(Women's Voices\) report](#). The week that the Budget was delivered, some 800 First Nations women from across Australia attended the Wiyi Yani U Thangani National Summit.

We urge policy makers to listen to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, as set out in the [Communique](#) from the summit. We also urge government to apply an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lens to policy making as well as a gender lens, to ensure that all policies support and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.

### **Budget Measures**

The Budget papers included a [fact sheet](#) on Empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that sets out a range of initiatives, across a number of portfolios. In addition to targeted investments, programs aimed at supporting the broader population will include specific commitments to Closing the Gap outcomes.

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap commits to four priority reforms to change the way that Government works with First Nations peoples:

1. Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making
2. Building the Community-Controlled Sector
3. Transforming Government Organisations
4. Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level

Specific measures will be discussed in more detail in the portfolio analysis of the Gender Lens.

### **Recommendations:**

The Government should commit to support the development and implementation of a National Framework for Action and recognise and invest in the Institute for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality, as called for by the Wiyi Yani U Thangani National Summit.

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The National Foundation for Australian Women is a feminist organisation, independent of party politics and working in partnership with other women's organisations. NFAW is dedicated to promoting and protecting the interests of Australian women, including intellectual, cultural, political, social, economic, legal, industrial and domestic spheres.